DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 370 361 FL 022 038

AUTHOR Khoo, Maureen; And Others
TITLE In Tandem: Preparing Singapore Teachers for a Changing Primary English Classroom: The Singapore Experience.
PUB DATE 91
NOTE 22p.; In: Sadtono, Eugenius, Ed. Issues in Language Teacher Education. Anthology Series 30; see FL 022 033.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Communicative Competence (Languages); *Curriculum Development; *Educational Change; *Elementary School Curriculum; *English (Second Language); Foreign Countries; Postsecondary Education; Preservice Teacher Education; Primary Education; Program Descriptions; Student Teachers; *Student Teaching; Teacher Education; *Teacher Education Curriculum; Teacher Educators
IDENTIFIERS *Singapore

ABSTRACT

This article examines the changing nature of the 2-year Diploma in Education program for English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) teachers at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore. It describes the evolution of language teacher training from the 1970s through the 1990s and the factors influencing the changing nature of the teacher education curriculum. It focuses on the new, communicative-orientated syllabus and textbooks adopted in 1990 for use in primary school English instruction, and the effect of this new curriculum on the Diploma of Education program. Over the last several years teacher educators have had the difficult task of preparing English teachers for teaching with structural materials during their student teaching while preparing them to teach with new yet unseen communicative materials when they graduated. (MDM)

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In Tandem: Preparing Singapore Teachers for a Changing Primary English Classroom the Singapore Experience

Maureen Khoo, Amy Sobrielo and Maha Sripathy

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IN TANDEM: PREPARING SINGAPORE TEACHERS FOR A CHANGING PRIMARY ENGLISH CLASSROOM - THE SINGAPORE EXPERIENCE

Maureen Khoo, Amy Sobrielo and Maha Sripathy

The image of wheels in tandem is at best a partial capture of the synchronisation that ought to exist between changing elements of education and society on one hand and the training of teachers who inherit and perpetuate the change on the other. In Singapore where changes in education are practically a way of life, the disproportion of penny-farthing wheels would be a more accurate image, with teacher training sometimes the smaller wheel behind maintaining pace under tremendous pressure, and sometimes needing to function as the forerunner.

The Diploma in Education Programme

The business of preparing new or pre-service teachers for the language classroom has been the distinct role of the only teacher-training college in Singapore, previously called the Teacher-Training College, then the Institute of Education, and since July 1991, the National Institute of Education forming part of the Nanyang Technological University.

For the preparation of Primary teachers there was for a long time only one major pre-service programme viz the Certificate in Education programme which was 2 years in duration for 'A' level Certificate school-leavers and 3 years for 'O' level Certificate school-leavers. The course has, since July 1990, been renamed the Diploma in Education course and has for some years now accepted only 'A' level certificate holders. Between 1990 and 1991, two new programmes for training of primary school teachers were started. This was the one-year Postgraduate Diploma in Education (Primary) or PGDE (Pr), and the four-year Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Science with Diploma in Education or Diploma in Physical Education (BA/BSC with DipEd/DipPE).

Only one major programme will be discussed here viz the 2-year Diploma in Education (the former Certificate in Education) that has been responsible for training the bulk of the primary teachers of today. The discussion of response to change would also be limited to description pertaining to in-campus course

delivery. This is not a denial of the fact that the teaching practicum forms the core of all teacher training courses. It is an admission that,in their current ratio to student numbers, the present small team of staff members handling the primary methods course retain maximum organisation for student learning only while they are on campus.

Factors Influencing Teacher-Training Curriculum

Several factors have influenced the determination, the constant shaping and refinement of the components, the methodology and the orientation of the Dip Ed course.

These are:

1) Post-1970 theoretical views about language learning and teaching upheld and advocated by the lecturing team;

2) on-going accumulation of knowledge base and perspectives of teacher training seen to be applicable in our local context;

3) external change that came in the form of national implementation of language programmes, syllabus and curriculum material changes

4) constraints of academic terms, articulation with Teaching Practice time,

5) constraints of the nature of student teacher knowledge and conceptions of teaching prior to significant field experience.

6) Composition and numbers in the lecturing team.

This paper will focus its discussion on how the Diploma in Education course has responded to the impact of recent theories of both language learning and teacher-training and to the external change factors (delineated above).

Theoretical Framework for Language Learning and Teaching Adopted

Recent developments in language teaching methodology have led to increased focus on learners' problems. This has served to reinforce the relatively recent understanding that the ability to use a language as a means of communication does not result from learning it as a formal system (Widdowson, 1980). In Singapore, a long marriage with a Structural (traditional grammar) language teaching programme and materials produced accuracy-conscious, inhibited language learners who could perform well at a discrete grammar task but not speak or write competently or confidently. Munby (1983) describes the traditional grammatical syllabus as "unrelated to the learners' communication needs" and having the effect of "demotivating many learners with devastating effects." He describes the attempt to move to a situational syllabus as also a failure. Singapore educators felt that correcting the balance with a strong dose of Communicative language teaching appeared to be the solution to a more effective attainment of communicative competence in our children. It followed then that in formulating the pre-service teacher-training course, and in the focus given to pedagogic content, the Communicative approach has been the dominant approach. To ensure the successful implementation of the Communicative approach to language teaching, the Primary Methods team have had to emphasize process rather than product in learning. Hence the current language curriculum for the teacher trainees as a whole explore the process approach - a natural outcome of adopting the Communicative approach. The four major skills are explored as processes which means teacher trainees need to understand what is involved in learning to read and learning to write, and how skills of reading & writing can be taught and consequently acquired.

Significant studies of early language learning and literacy acquisition solidly based on studies of children were used as framework for instruction (Clay, 1979; Holdaway, 1979; Cambourne, 1988;). Available research findings of early literacy and language development of Singapore children from P1 - P3 (Ng, 1980, 1984, 1987; Khoo & Ng, 1985) had a strong influence on curriculum orientations.Descriptions of natural language learning conditions (Cambourne, 1988) pointed clearly to the wisdom of integrated language instruction. Familiarity with experimental studies like "procedural facilitation" in writing preceded (and prepared the lecturing team for) the notion of "instructional scaffolding" as an alternative model of literacy instruction (Langer & Applebee, 1986). Such a notion in turn influenced procedural and content details of our language teaching curriculum for teacher-training.

Theoretical Framework Determining Teacher-Training Methodology

The major concern of any pre-service course for teachers is how best to prepare the trainees for teaching in the classroom. Regardless of whether there is external stimulus to change, teacher educators constantly search for improved ways to develop the professional abilities of student teachers and for the best way to balance theory and hands-on experience with accompanying analysis and reflection.

Content

First there is the difficult decision of content and demarcation of content area. Jim Eggleston (1985) expresses the dilemma faced by the lecturer in a discipline. Should he/she, in the limited time available, attempt to induct students into its form of disciplined enquiry, or merely describe those theoretical constructs which relate particularly to the student teachers' anticipated experience of schools, teachers and children in their first year of teaching? Shulman (1987) in analysing knowledge base for teachers explains that "the teacher must have not only depth of understanding with respect to the particular subjects taught, but also a broad liberal education that serves as a framework for old learning and as a facilitator for new understanding."

Content decisions become increasingly difficult as knowledge base of many areas of language learning and teaching (e.g reading comprehension and metacognition) expands at a prolific pace, and as knowledge transcends and merges disciplines (e.g. linguistics and psychology in a subject like reading).

Lee Shulman (1987) identifies 7 items as essential categories of teacher knowledge base:

(i) content knowledge
(ii) general pedagogical knowledge with special reference to principles & strategies of classroom management;
(iii) curriculum knowledge with particular grasp of the materials and programs.;
(iv) pedagogical content knowledge, that special amalgam of content and pedagogy that is uniquely the province of teachers, their own special form of professional understanding;
(v) knowledge of learners and their characteristics;
(vi) knowledge of educational contexts (e.g.school contexts)
(vii) knowledge of educational ends, purposes and values, and their philosophical and historical grounds.

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The curriculum areas suggested here for the teacher educator's attention is vast. Earlier training programmes would likely be loaded in (i) and (vii) leaving the trainee to encounter (ii), (iii), (v) and (vi) in an ad hoc fashion during Teaching Practice. Shulman makes the categorical point that it is *pedagogical content knowledge* (iv) that "identifies the distinctive bodies of knowledge for teaching." He explains that it "represents the blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics, problems, or issues are organized, represented, and adapted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners, and presented for instruction." If teacher educators accept that, it is left to us to explore the extent to which conditions can be created for new teachers to be initiated into such content- and context- specific knowledge.

Learning Environment

There is then the question of what learning environment is best.

John Goodlad and his colleagues (1990) postulated 19 conditions necessary to the preparation of teachers for effective education. Among these were two declaring that such programs must provide extensive opportunities for future teachers to move beyond being students of organized knowledge to becoming teachers who would see it natural to *inquire into knowledge* and its teaching and learning.

Context specificity has been found to be a necessary requisite condition for effective teacher training. Shulman in an interview with Dennis Sparks this year (Sparks, 1992) reinforces this point: (that)" individuals who have studied teaching and learning over the past decade have become increasingly convinced that most human learning and teaching is highly specific and situated. There is much less broad transfer and generalizability from one domain to another than we have thought". He cites Susan Stodolsky in her book The Subject Matters "that elementary teachers act very differently with the same students when they shift from teaching math to teaching social studies, and back again. They do not have a generic teaching style, but quite dramatically adapt their teaching to the material being taught."

Critical Learning Experiences

Certain critical experiences for teacher trainees are repeatedly identified for mention in different ways:

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Making connections:

If learning is to mean the making of connections, then we see the need to provide for our trainees the connection between their own experience of learning and what we want them to know about the developmental learning children go through.

Teachers are also helped into becoming conscious of the theory of learning they are practising in the classroom every day through courses that proceed by moving from practice to theory and back again all the time (Thomson,1987).

Modelling:

Modelling is perceived to be a powerful tool. (Horan, 1987). The learning process is severely limited if there is no model available. He further explains that the modelling experience involves *observation* (which is extremely valuable for professional development), *discussions* of issues of classroom management, and, for those observed, a *taking stock* of one's practice. Catherine Y. Fosnot (1989) qualifies the aim of modelling . It must not lead to passive imitation. "The main purpose of the modelling is *for critique, analysis, and debate* of pedagogy..This type of experience serves as a constructive experience ..(Student teachers) become empowered, 'thinking' teachers.."

Modelling takes on a greater importance in the event that student teachers are confronted with new teaching techniques alien to their past experience and to the experience of their 'expert teacher' out in the field. This would be the typical situation for the fast-changing educational scene in Singapore.

Reflection:

Reflection is a crucial experience in teacher training. Component skills are cited as reviewing, reconstructing, reenacting, critically analyzing and supporting explanations with evidence (Shulman, 1987). Thomson (1987) posits that "just as teachers should involve their pupils in reflective evaluations of their own learning (what they have learnt and how they have learnt it) after being engaged in a classroom activity, so teachers should reflectively (and reflexively) evaluate their own teaching procedures..." He further explains that without understanding why and how good methods work, and the purpose they serve, there can be no judgement of their effectiveness.

The University of Leicester in 1982/83 included in a revamped 'Methods' course a need for students to publicly account for their own teaching experiences. Their teaching experiences were subject to being extensively debated on. The aim was that "having reflected extensively upon their own and other's practical experiences, students should have acquired a personal theory of education by the end of their training." (Furlong, 1988)

Reflection activities of diverse types are easily incorporated into training activities and assignments but demands more curriculum time.

Pedagogical diversity

It is important that there is pedagogical diversity. In the implementation of recurrent change demanded of policy makers, teacher educators have a responsibility to produce teachers who are flexible. No single approach is therefore advocated as the only methodological option available.

While providing trainees with the theoretical basis for adopting one approach as opposed to another, teacher educators have themselves to develop and model a repertoire of representations (demonstrations, concrete examples, analogies) to help the trainees transcend the unknown or half-known knowledge.

Mirroring classroom instruction strategies in training methodology

Then just as we teach trainees to be flexible and eclectic in their selection of methods, lecturers too must provide them with a range of training routes - lectures, discussions, projects, simulations, seminars and workshops.

Problem-based case instruction

Problem-based learning strategies such as case studies incorporate features that foster transfer of learning as long as there is sufficient similarities between the learning context and real life.

Such learning experiences are specially helpful when trainees are undergoing in-campus training without the access to the classroom and children.

Model: Of teacher development stages

For operational purposes, a model of teacher development stages forms a useful curriculum guide. Updated information on such models has the effect of reinforcing and confirming intuitive knowledge of teacher educators. The lecturing team subscribes to the following model:

At the initial stage a teacher trainee is receiving input that sets him thinking and reformulating his schema. Hence at this initial stage, he is taken back through time to recall, analyze and consolidate his understanding of language learning, and consequently, children's language learning.

Following this 'passive' receiving stage, theories of learning (in our context, of reading & writing) are expounded, underlining the essentials and exorcizing the outmoded. At this stage, preconceptions and misconceptions may need to surface, to be talked about and opportunities given to the student to compare what he thinks is going on to what is going on. He would have to deal with contrasts and contradictions (Shulman, 1990). This stage should equip the student teacher with propositional knowledge which enables the production of at least "an approximation to the required action." (Anderson,1982).

The third stage would likely coincide with his teaching practice when he learns to apply and make connections between propositional knowledge and the practicality of school expectations. As such trainees often fumble through their initial experience of teaching, he learns the wisdom of survival, and acquire automaticity, which for him does not mean having a mastery of the various components but rather an ability to function pragmatically by a reduced monitoring of the various components that leads to effective teaching.

Model: Of the teaching task

To complement the teacher developmental stage model, the lecturing team has been guided by a model of the teaching task, arrived largely intuitively and confirmed by literature and research on teacher education.

From Shulman's 'Model of Pedagogical Reasoning and Action', (1987), intuitive attempts to sequence learning tasks for teachers may be checked out against a model for stages of pedagogical preparation.

The model begins with comprehension of subject matter (including purposes, subject matter structures etc).

This is followed by processes he calls **'transformation'** which involves preparing content, use of a representational repertoire (analogies, metaphors, examples, demonstrations, experiential tasks), selection from among this repertoire and organizing them, and adaptation to student characteristics.

Only after this comes the process of teaching or instruction which involves management, presentation, questioning.

Evaluation processes follow and this is completed by reflection and arrival at new comprehensions of subject matter, of students, of teaching and of self.

The theoretical framework so far described, determining the content and methodology for the Diploma in Education programme, has been shaped, and reinforced through yearly and on-going accumulation of knowledge base about teacher-training. Refinement and procedural orientations of the course has also been largely affected by other change factors (See p.2). The theoretical orientations did not occur independently of external change factors. What could have remained merely academic dissemination of theoretical trends in pedagogy and language learning became institutionalised realities when policy makers implemented language programme changes on a national scale at a heady pace, in consecutive progression.

External Change Factors:

A host of change events affecting primary language teaching seemed to have occurred beginning in the 1980s.

Implementation of new Language Programmes

Between 1983 and 1987 a study of reading problems initiated these changes. This was 'The Reading Skill Project' (conducted by an Institute of Education team) - a longitudinal study of 624 Primary 1-3 children. Its findings (Ng, 1987) led to the implementation of the Reading & English Acquisition Programme *(REAP) for lower primary language classes* in 1985 starting with implementation in 90 lower Primary classes, reaching 962 classes in 1987, and completing its teacher retraining programme in 1991. The Reading & English Acquisition Programme changed the approach to language learning through centering language on enjoyable and meaningful use. It advocated integrated language learning that was reading centred. Its main features were the immersion

of children in two main approaches to reading viz the Shared Book Approach (which involved class sharing of stories from an enlarged book) and the Language Experience Approach to reading. Accompanying this was an extensive reading programme called Book Flood and the building up of enrichment language activities like Listening Post and Word Banks.

Another major innovation in the primary language scene was the introduction of the ***Active Communicative Teaching programme (ACT) in upper primary classes***, another nationwide language teacher retraining scheme carried out jointly by the British Council Singapore as well as by staff from the Regional Language Centre. Between 1986 and 1990 all upper Primary teacher had been given training to carry out the ACT language programme.

The aims of ACT were similiar to that of REAP. Language teachers were to be retrained for a Communicative Approach to Language teaching. They had to understand how to teach for communicative competence rather than grammatical competence; they had to change their approaches so that language is learnt through use rather than usage, through language functions rather than form.

Like REAP classes,they needed to create a language learning environment that is interesting and non-threatening. Features of the ACT programme were integrated language teaching, Process Writing, an extensive reading programme for the classroom including the use of Uninterrrupted Sustained Silent Reading sessions, Communicative language games and activities, selective grammar teaching based on pupils' communicative needs, and the development of a thematic approach to language teaching and materials.

New Syllabus & Language text package

In 1991, a ***new Primary English syllabus*** was presented to schools. A ***new English Primary curriculum package***, the Primary English Thematic Series (PETS) was to accompany the new Syllabus, and to be delivered in stages, beginning with new primary 1 and 2 texts in 1992. The curriculum package is organized along thematic lines and aims at matching the language approaches already being practiced. Integrated language skill teaching is the hallmark of each unit's activities. Reading and writing methods already incorporated in the Reading & English Language Programme like Shared Reading, Language Experience, Dictated Stories and Word Bank activities are incorporated as activities within each unit. Units called 'Language Use' begin by statement of Communicative function as well as suggested language structures for practice.

Changes in the Teacher Training Programme

Prior to 1981:

The Special Methods course as the Teaching of English course was called between 1968-1981 was one of a few English courses. It was always accompanied by a Language Enrichment course (English Language 1) and Academic Courses in 2 specialized areas (e.g. English and Maths). It seems that content knowledge and curriculum knowledge was seen as the requisite knowledge base for teaching. The language skills were taught as separate skills listed under the main categories of oral English, Reading and Writing. Language Activities included discrete items like Story Telling and Poetry, Dramatic Activities, Spelling and Dictation. Each skill as taught covered aims, organization, methods and sometimes stages of development. The organization was linear and no comprehensive theoretical framework was evident from the curriculum description available.

Course hours were 30 hours each year.

1981 to 1985:

The teaching of Reading seemed to have gained prominence. It was evidently skill-based with skills listed as sight words, phonics, structural analysis, visual discrimination. The presence of a reading specialist in the team was evident from the details given of topics like 'the Reading Process'. The Writing syllabus dwelled on Guided and Controlled Practice methods giving ideas for class implementation and structured approaches to writing.

It seems at this stage that a concept of scaffolding in a restricted sense dominated. There was in evidence some attention to process. These included ideas similiar to REAP/ACT activities like 'dictated stories', multimedia stimulus to writing. Transformational exercises in writing were in evidence e.g. changing a narrative portion to instructions. The emphasis however was still clearly on accuracy of language in writing and a concentration on correctness of form.

The course duration was 90 hrs per year.

1985 onwards

The course that developed beginning with 1985 onwards and the coming of REAP can be seen to be organized into 6 modules.

Module 1:	Introduction to Language Teaching
Module 2:	Reading in the Primary School
Module 3:	Teaching Writing Skills
Module 4:	Children's Literature in the Language Classroom
Module 5:	Formal and Informal Assessment

Module 1: 'Introduction to Language Teaching' serves to help trainees ***make the connections*** between what they can recall of their school learning of language and the present scenario of language learning in the REAP and ACT classroom. For this purpose, a video was specially produced that gave an overview of the Communicative classroom in Singapore schools. Trainees are also exposed to a ***greater knowledge of curricular trends*** by a brief introduction to past language approaches. Finally, they are led to understand the differences between first and second language acquisition and the factors affecting language learning including the theoretical base for the current Communicative language teaching emphasis. Tutorial activities allow for ***reflection*** exercises as well as an examination of curriculum materials written under different philosophical frames.

Module 2: 'Reading in the Primary School' serves to provide trainees with a comprehensive knowledge base on Reading, the psycholinguistic views of the reading process, the different stages of the development of a reader, three major approaches to the teaching of reading viz the Shared Book Approach, the Modified Language Experience Approach and the Directed Reading and Thinking Activity. In this module tutorial activities allow for teacher ***modelling*** and hands-on practice in simulated 'childrens' groups. Further reinforcement of understanding of principles and rationale was given last year in including an assignment on lesson planning for these approaches preceding a group demonstration of the chosen approaches the following week. Other information about enrichment activities in REAP are delivered at lectures with the use of slides and videos. ***Context-specificity*** and ***experiential learning*** are thus emphasized. The importance of story reading to children and the pleasure it gives is emphasised through an established practice among the team of lecturers to begin each lecture and sometimes tutorials as well with the reading of a story or a poem. In this way, the condition of ***mirroring classroom instruction strategies through training strategies*** is created.

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Module 3: The 'Teaching Writing Skills' module is begun by a lecture on the Reading-Writing Connection followed by an introduction to ACT and its principles and activities. This provides the students an understanding of the related nature of language development, and the ***specific context*** in which the Process Writing programme is run- in the upper Primary. A revisit of thematic units is provided for in the second year. Writing module tutorial activities include playing tapes of teacher-student conferencing, demonstrating (***modelling***) pre-writing activities, setting an assignmnent on planning pre-writing lessons based on a theme. A few weeks are given to this so that trainees are involved with hunting down resources, preparing presentation aids, discussing, reflecting and decision making ***(context-specificity/reflection)***. The last week of this module brings them into the principles governing feedback and marking.

In the beginning of this year, the module finished off with an introduction to grammar lessons. Trainees are introduced to grammar teaching in terms of diagnosis, presentation, practice and production. The experience with needs diagnosis is linked with errors in writing encountered when dealing with 'marking' ***(making connections)***.

The major assignment for the year is one in which trainees have to carry out a reading lesson with one child. They are judged on their observation skills about the child's reading level and needs, their choice of materials and approach to match the child ***(problem-based case instruction)***. A taped recording of the child is required. Most important of all is the ***critical reflection*** that is required both on the child's reading performance and their own teaching.

These modules have been repeatedly chosen as they are seen to be 'survival skills' prior to a trainee's first teaching practice stint.

The ***Second Year Programme*** includes enrichment topics like exposure to drama and puppet play in the language classroom, the use of poetry for language development and metacognitive areas of knowledge like Story Grammar, Expository Text Structures. The most weighty part of the year's topics is on Assessment. Students are introduced to analysing writing, miscue analysis and running records, and the idea of portfolios and comprehension testing.

A development in the right direction last year was when students were made responsible for delivery of topics under guided conditions. Questions and references were given and students prepared to present (as a group evaluation task) seminar topics ranging from story grammar to puppetry. Response was most positive as trainees enjoyed their colleagues' varied styles of presentation.

As criteria for effective seminars included class participation, a great deal of this was achieved. Student feedback on this innovative way of combining learning with evaluation was that trainees read far more than they would ever have in the usual tutorial system and they felt an accomplishment for having acquired considerable depth of knowledge in the area they presented. The training programme in this way gave them an opportunity to *mirror* integrated classroom teaching behaviours and instructional strategies albeit to students who were their peers.

Time Constraints and Nature of Student Teacher Knowledge

Since the period for the Teaching Practicum (10 weeks each Dip Ed year) needs to coincide with the most suitable school month both for the schools and for the children to receive 'new' teachers, the first teaching practice term usually falls in early January or the third term of the Institute year. This leaves teacher educators less than 20 in-campus weeks in the first year of the programme to prepare trainees for 'survival' skills to handle English programmes in both lower and upper primary. Unlike in-service retraining programmes which offer a more focussed curriculum, pre-service training programmes include a vast array of courses of which language teaching method is only one.Under such time constraints, the lecturing team is constantly faced with difficult choices when wrestling with curricular decisions to include innovative but time-consuming ideas for hands-on experiential learning, demonstrations,reflection and discussion opportunities.

The enrolment numbers in the Dip Ed course and the ratio of lecturers involved with the programme have always posed realistic constraints - numbers in the range of 300-350 in each of the two year course handled by 7 lecturers with tutorial classes of 20-25 students.

Furthermore, trainees range in teaching experience, a good number having none. They also arrive with strong pre-conceptions and misconceptions of what language teaching is, drawing from their own vague experiences as primary students. (See 'model of teacher development stage', p.6). Faced with the prospect of teaching with new instructional approaches not within their own experience, trainees' misconceptions often pose great difficulties to their own learning. The attitude to teaching writing through a process approach is one such example of a problematic area.

The Lecturing Team: Environment for Professional Exchange

Exchanges: The Primary English Methods lecturing team of 6 or 7 through 1985 to 1990 adopted a procedure of fortnightly and term-end meetings for professional exchanges on curriculum. Team members, particularly classroom practitioners and those who had been involved in experiential-type of in-service training of teachers in the new English programmes pressed for more hands-on learning and attention to class management details in the delivery of theoretical principles. There was a definitive trend towards instructional activities that were approximations to classroom teaching. This was reinforced by positive feedback from trainees. Invariably, course-end evaluations spoke of enjoyable learning during 'hands-on' tutorial sessions or seminars resulting in clearer insights into the technical details of teaching procedures.

Composition: The mixed composition of lecturers was used to advantage. Expatriate lecturers brought with them fresh perspectives of both classroom programmes and teacher training methodology. Singaporean lecturers provided the input of realistic constraints in local schools. A heavy emphasis on reading from a psycholinguistic perspective came about because of reading specialists joining the team in 1983. One of the main strengths of the Primary methods course has been the close team work that has been made possible by the commitment, the sharing attitude and the personalities of the team members.

Articulation of Curriculum Change and Teacher Training

The series of curriculum changes has had repercussions for new teachers.

Since the Dip. Ed primary methods course prepares teacher trainees for both lower primary and upper primary language teaching, teacher trainees have always had to be prepared to teach at both levels. With the recent changes they have to be equipped with preparedness if not competence for both language programmes (REAP and ACT). At entrance point new teachers are expected to have adequate understanding of the principles advocated by the programmes. Lower Primary new teachers have to be competent in using two major language approaches viz the Shared Book Approach and the Modified Language Experience Approach. New teachers in upper primary have to be competent in guiding children through process stages of writing, to manage an extensive reading programme, and to be able to devise and implement language teaching based on themes.

All new teachers since 1985 need competence in managing a reading-centred language arts programme which involves a heightened level of classroom management skills, a knowledge of efficient and flexible use of group work and management of learning centres (library corner, listening post).

Being caught in the transition years of curriculum change brings on a peculiar problem and probably the most problematic task for new teachers or trainee teachers on practicum. They have had to know how to integrate the communicative language activities and approaches to reading & writing with the traditional language arts package in the years before the the emergence of the new and promised curriculum materials.

A similiar if not not problematic situation was faced for teacher trainees (and teacher educators) in the matter of knowledge of school assessments. While teacher trainees learnt of more wholistic types of assessments (portfolios, story retelling, running records and miscue analysis, selective marking) that should better match the reading and writing instructional approaches being practiced in the classroom, trainees found little opportunities to encounter these in the monthly school assessments which generally followed the old Table of Specifications drawn for Primary School Leaving Exam under the structural syllabus. Trainees had in fact to be alerted to expect the mismatch and to use traditional school assessments. This is a problem being resolved with the writing of new Table of Specifications still in process for the lower primary classes.

These are in fact overwhelming demands on teachers who may not have acquired working level of automaticity even in the most basic skills like framing of questions, and noise control.

The impact of curriculum change makes for greater complexity in teacher training. First, the teacher educator has to create opportunities to clear the preconceptions or misconceptions of learning and teaching that trainees bring with them from their past (Shulman, 1990), and then expose them to a diversity of methods, directing them towards reflection, comparision and yet encouraging growing autonomy in pedagogical judgment. But under conditions of national curriculum change, (s)he feels obliged to play the role of the implementor, that is to persuade and to direct attitude change.

The complexity is doubled when the training grounds fail to provide the target training opportunities. The student teacher may be placed in a school where the curriculum changes are not conscientiously implemented by individual 'expert' teachers. The 'casualties' of teacher training may arise in schools in such situations

or where trainees are, for reasons of administrative difficulties, not given target classes and subjects to practice in. For example, there have been a few unfortunate cases of trainees only being given teaching opportunities at one level of primary classes through 2 years of practice attachment to a school, or when they were caught in the middle of implementation stages of REAP and were teaching Primary 3s in schools that were just beginning the REAP programme in Primary 1. On graduating, such new teachers may be immediately required to teach with the very same instructional approaches (s)he missed practising in.

At the teacher educator end there was in the last 6 years, the complexity of having to prepare teachers for teaching with structural materials during teaching practice and preparing them to teach with new yet unseen communicative materials when they graduated.

This was a professional quandary only the teacher educators would know during changes in curriculum and programmes at a national level. This problem perhaps need not have stayed with us for years if implementation sequences concerning teacher training, syllabus generation, and curriculum material development could have been much more carefully planned and articulated.

Conclusion

If the students are to be able to "survive" their initial years in the service, more sympathetic contexts must be created for them. A greater understanding of the developmental process of a teacher is needed by teacher trainers, Education Ministries and schools. What the new teacher is faced with is aptly described by Professor Leslie Perry and quoted by Margaret Maden (1971): "Whereas initial training attempts to preserve an open mind, school retraining is concerned to see that the new teacher subscribes to specific beliefs about teaching and it puts him or her under social pressure to accept the beliefs and attitudes that are common to the rest of the staff. There appear to be few teachers capable of resisting this pressure, and consequently, they opt for a version of teaching recommended by retraining rather than by initial training .... they (young teachers) are immature and inexperienced and faced with a conflict: either to fight a lone battle for a method learnt in college but frequently disfavoured in the school, or to abandon the training just left and submit to new retraining." 'Retraining' is specially retrogressive when it amounts to a return to traditional teaching methods that are long established but unsound.

If student teachers at the end of the course, are to achieve "professional autonomy to implement methods which are theoretically, defensibly and demonstrably effective" (Eggleston, 1985) they will need to be very sure of what teaching theories they believe in especially in their first years in service. Having said that, however, one has to keep in mind that initial training is precisely that. Teaching demands a long period of training continuing throughout the in-service years and for it to be effective it requires the co-operation and collaboration of all involved parties i.e. training institutions, ministeries of education, schools and teachers themselves.

In an environment of constant change, the success of implementation of change programmes rests entirely on collaborative moves in tandem by all the above mentioned parties in planning and articulating training and retraining for change.

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